

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00  
SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07 L-03  
PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 COME-00 EB-08 LAB-04  
SIL-01 AID-05 CU-04 DHA-05 /077 W  
-----125881 290847Z /12

O R 290230Z OCT 77  
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6195  
INFO AMEMBASSY LIMA  
AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 7476

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: ELAB PINT PINS SHUM EC  
SUBJ: AZTRA: GOE REITERATES ITS POSITION

REF: QUITO 7406

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: ON A NATIONAL RADIO AND TELEVISION NETWORK THE EVENING OF OCT. 27, GOE SPOKESMEN REINFORCED AND AMPLIFIED THE PREVIOUSLY STATED THESIS THAT THE GOVERNMENT IS WITHOUT FAULT IN THE AZTRA INCIDENT WHILE CLAIMING THAT ECUADOR IS THE TARGET OF AN INTERNATIONAL EXTREMIST CONSPIRACY. DEMONSTRATIONS PROTESTING THE AZTRA INCIDENT CONTINUE UNABATED. THE COUNTRY'S MAJOR SUGAR MILLS REMAIN ON STRIKE WHILE THE NATIONAL LABOR ORGANIZATIONS ARE FLOUNDERING, UNABLE TO MOBILIZE UNITED OR EFFECTIVE ACTION. END SUMMARY.

2. ON NATIONAL RADIO AND TELEVISION THE EVENING OF OCT. 27, IN THE PERSONS OF UNDER SECRETARY OF GOVERNMENT JAVIER MANRIQUE AND UNDER SECRETARY OF LABOR ARTURO GROSS, THE GOE PRESENTED WHAT SEEMS TO BE ITS DEFINITIVE DEFENSE AND POSITION ON THE AZTRA INCIDENT. (FULL TRANSCRIPT BEING SENT). THE MEN PRESENTED IN DETAIL, WITH THE USE OF CHARTS, THE GOVERNMENT'S  
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VIEW OF WHAT OCCURRED AT AZTRA. THE GOE CONTINUES TO DENY ALL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE AZTRA DEATHS AND BLAMES EXTREMIST LABOR AGITATORS.

3. THE GOE FURTHER DETAILED THE INITIAL LABOR DISPUTE AT AZTRA, JUSTIFYING ITS POSITION THAT THE STRIKE WAS ILLEGAL. THE DEATHS OCCURRED, SAID GROSS, WHEN LABOR LEADERS ARMED

WITH STAVES AND FIREARMS ALLEGEDLY TRYING TO PREVENT THE DEPARTURE OF WORKERS FROM THE AZTRA FACILITIES, STAMPEDED THEM INTO A CANAL WHERE SOME OF THEM DROWNED.

4. ADDING ANOTHER ELEMENT TO THE EARLIER ACCUSATIONS THAT THE AZTRA LABOR LEADERS WERE LEFTIST EXTREMISTS, THE GOE SPOKESMEN DETAILED A WHOLE SERIES OF LABOR PROBLEMS THAT HAVE DEVELOPED DURING THE TERM OF THIS GOVERNMENT AND CONCLUDED THAT THEY ARE ALL PART OF AN EXTERNALLY DIRECTED AND FINANCED EXTREMIST CONSPIRACY TARGETED ON ECUADOR.

5. STUDENT AND LABOR DISORDERS ARE CONTINUING ACROSS THE COUNTRY. ALTHOUGH THE PRESS GIVES COVERAGE TO ONLY THE VANDALISM ASPECTS OF SUCH DEMONSTRATIONS, RUMORS ARE CIRCULATING FROM OTHER SOURCES THAT SOME DEATHS AND SERIOUS INJURIES HAVE RESULTED FROM CONFRONTATIONS WITH THE POLICE. EMBASSY HAS NO CONFIRMATION OF THESE RUMORS.

6. THE STRIKES AT THE COUNTRY'S MAJOR SUGAR MILLS ARE CONTINUING BUT LABOR HAS MANAGED TO DO LITTLE ELSE. THE GUAYAS AFFILIATES OF THE THREE NATIONAL CONFEDERATIONS HAVE CALLED FOR A TWO HOUR WORK STOPPAGE OF THEIR MEMBERS. CHAUFFEURS' FEDERATION JOSE VASQUEZ INFORMED POL/LABOFF OCT. 28 THAT ALTHOUGH THE FEDERATION VIEWS THE CURRENT SITUATION AS BEING VERY SERIOUS, IT IS NOT PRESENTLY CONSIDERING JOINING THE THREE CONFEDERATIONS IN A NATIONAL STRIKE. VASQUEZ  
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SAID THAT SUCH A STRIKE COULD COME ABOUT, PARTICULARLY IF THE GOE DOES NOT DELIVER ON CERTAIN ITEMS ALREADY PROMISED THE CHAUFFEURS. ANY DECISION ON A TRANSPORTATION SOLIDARITY STRIKE WILL NOT BE TAKEN FOR AT LEAST TWO WEEKS AND WOULD HAVE TO BE CAREFULLY CONSIDERED. VASQUEZ BELIEVES THAT SUCH A STRIKE WOULD MEAN EITHER EVEN STRONGER REPRESSION BY THE GOE OR THE FALL OF THE GOVERNMENT.

7. COMMENT: THE HIGH-POWERED PRESENTATION ON NATIONAL MEDIA BY TWO BIG GUNS OF THE GOE HAS FIRMLY SET THE GOE DEFENSE IN CONCRETE. ALTHOUGH THE GOVERNMENT HAS PROMISED AN IMPARTIAL INVESTIGATION BY THE MINISTRIES OF LABOR AND GOVERNMENT, THE LINE IS NOW FIRM AND NO INVESTIGATIVE REPORT CAN BE EXPECTED TO CONTRADICT THE PRESENT DEFENSE. THE COURTS, WHICH ARE CHARGED UNDER THE LAW WITH INVESTIGATING VIOLENT DEATHS AND AFFIXING RESPONSIBILITY, ARE UNLIKELY TO OBTAIN EVIDENCE SUFFICIENT TO CONTRADICT THE VERSION OF THE POLICE. SINCE THE ONSET, THIS LINE HAS MET WITH PUBLIC SKEPTICISM AND CANNOT BE EXPECTED TO WIN MANY NEW CONVERTS. AT THE SAME TIME, THERE IS A CONSIDERABLE BODY OF PUBLIC OPINION THAT HAS NO SYMPATHY FOR ORGANIZED LABOR AND APPROVES OF A HARD GOE LINE ON LABOR UNREST. THUS, SKEPTICISM ABOUT THE GOE'S VERSION OF AZTRA

IS NOT TANTAMOUNT TO DISAPPROVAL. UNLESS THE POLITICIANS  
AND THE WEAKENED AND CONFUSED LABOR MOVEMENT FIND AN EFFECTIVE  
MEANS TO OPPOSE THE GOE, IT SEEMS LIKELY THAT THE GOVERNMENT,  
THOUGH BADLY SCARRED, WILL SURVIVE. IF, HOWEVER, BY FOLLOWING  
THE LOGIC OF ITS OWN DEFENSE, THE GOVERNMENT INCREASES THE  
REPRESSION AGAINST LABOR AND "EXTREMISTS," IT COULD ITSELF  
CREATE FURTHER INCIDENTS THAT WILL NOURISH THE CURRENT  
RESISTANCE AND DISORDER.  
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## Message Attributes

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**Review Markings:**  
Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
22 May 2009  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009